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SAINT GEORGE AND THE DRAGON  
BY ALBRECHT DÜRER

## FIVE YEARS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS

THIS month the Department of Prints will celebrate its fifth anniversary, and it seems fitting, therefore, to give a short account of its progress and development—to stand it against the door-jamb, as it were, and make a pencil mark for future reference. During the first two years of the existence of the department the great European war was in progress, and within six months after its creation this country also was involved in the conflict. During the war period and for a considerable time thereafter, intercourse with Europe was difficult when not impossible, and great obstacles were presented to the acquisition of prints on the other side of the Atlantic. Thus in some respects the growth of the department may have seemed slow to those who have watched it from without the Museum. None of its collections, excepting perhaps its Dürers, stands forth with any particular eminence,

but this failure to achieve stature is explainable by the fact that their foundations have been laid as broadly and as solidly as possible. Unlike a private collector, who is under no obligation to any one in regard to what he shall collect, the Museum collection is a public one intended to serve the interests not merely of the fancier of prints of one or another school or type but students and the general public, and especially artists and designers. How best to do this has often been a serious problem, but in the long run it has been endeavored by spreading the butter thin on as much bread as possible rather than by putting it thick on fewer slices. The attempt has thus been to acquire representation of as many kinds and groups of prints as opportunity afforded, to the end that in the shortest possible time the Museum should possess typical specimens illustrating the historic and artistic development of the several graphic arts.

It was necessary in the beginning, if not as matter of strict logic, at least from

the point of view of practicability, to define and limit the scope of the purchases of the new department. The only two definitions adopted have been that "prints" are printed pictures of every kind and that the artistic value of a print is in no way dependent upon the medium in which or the purpose for which it was made. The limitations have been that unless of importance or interest as specimens of technique or process no reproductive prints should be purchased, and that no print should be purchased which was primarily of interest because of something extrinsic to it. Thus but very few prints after paintings have been acquired in the market, and an even smaller number of portraits of celebrities or views of places. The deliberate effort has thus been to create a collection representative, except in one particular, only of the art and the history of the printed picture.

The one exception to this rather strict program is that of "ornament," the term under which print-room jargon classifies designs for use in the arts and crafts. Many of the engraved designs, especially those of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and eighteenth centuries, are of great beauty simply as engravings, and their presence in the collection can be justified on that ground alone. But an even more important reason underlies their acquisition, which is that to an astonishing extent the engraved designs of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance periods are original documents of the most fundamental importance to any understanding or scientific knowledge of the European decorative arts of those periods. The Museum already possessing one of the greatest and most important collections of the decorative arts in this country, it seemed only fitting that it should be supplemented by a suitable collection of engraved ornament. Entirely aside from its value to professed students and to the staff of the Museum, this collection is potentially of great value to the practising designers of the day, as it would seem to need no argument to prove that the proper study of designers is design.

An attempt has also been made, follow-

ing the example set by the Kupferstich Kabinett in Berlin and the Print Room of the British Museum, to gather together a group of artistically important illustrated books, since if this field were to be left untouched not only would most of the more important woodcuts fail to be represented, but many most delightful engravings and lithographs would needs be absent from the collection. Less has been done in this particular field than in any of the others, but nevertheless the little group of books now in the glazed cases of the department is beginning in its small way to be representative of the several more important types of work.

At the time the department was created by vote of its Trustees, the Museum, while possessing a considerable number of prints, some of them of great artistic and historic value, had no collection of prints which was recognized as such. They were scattered through the several departments, and the greater number of them were registered in the Library. Of these the most important single groups were a collection of ninety-three modern etchings presented in 1883 by William Loring Andrews, then and for a generation afterwards the beloved Honorary Librarian of the Museum, one hundred and forty-two etchings and engravings by and after Hogarth presented in 1891 by Miss Sarah Lazarus, forty-five eighteenth-century English color prints bequeathed in 1914 by Frederick Townsend Martin, and the large collection of portraits of American revolutionary and early republican worthies presented in 1883 and 1885 by William H. Huntington. There were also in the Library a number of interesting illustrated books and bound collections of prints, among them several of very real importance. For various reasons it was not practicable to bring these together in the new department at the time of its creation and several years were to pass by before any considerable number of them were transferred to it.

So far as the department was concerned, its collection was thus to be created from the very beginning. Early in 1917 three rooms were assigned to it in the basement

of Wing J for use as office, study room, and stack room, and three galleries on the second story of the same wing were temporarily turned over to it.

Fittingly, the first accession after the creation of the new department was a group of etchings by Miss Mary Cassatt, the dean of American etchers, which was given by Paul J. Sachs and his brother Arthur. At the same time Walter Sachs presented a number of aquatints by Goya. These were but the first of a steady stream of gifts from the friends of the Museum, which happily still continues. The first engraving by an old master and the first illustrated book to enter the collection were Dürer's Little Horse and Dorat's Baisers, respectively the gifts of Henry McMahon Painter and Mortimer L. Schiff.

In February, 1917, the department made the largest and in some respects the most important acquisition that it has ever made when it took over from the executors of the late Harris Brisbane Dick the collection of prints made by him and by his father, William B. Dick, before him. There were many thousand pieces in the Dick boxes, for just as the son had specialized in the work of the more modern etchers, such for example as Whistler, Haden, Cameron, and Zorn, so had the father been a devoted extra-illustrator not only of several books relating to the eighteenth century in England but of a number of dictionaries of painters and engravers. The collection therefore contained, in addition to the fine series of prints by the artists whose names have just been mentioned, examples from the hands of a great many of the older print makers. The Dick Collection, thus acquired so early in the life of the new department, has since served to a very large extent as the basis for its subsequent growth. Its acquisition was shortly followed by a group of a great many old prints, principally engravings, given by Henry Walters, and another, principally of etchings, given by David Keppel, which admirably supplemented the miscellaneous portion of the Dick Collection, and, especially as aided by an important lot of miscellaneous old prints

acquired at the sale of the Wilton House Collection, made it possible for the Museum at a bound to show the student of the history of engraving and etching typical examples by a large portion of the more important graphic artists of past times. The present collection of woodcuts, unlike the etchings and engravings, has been made almost entirely by small purchases, and while not so full a series as either of those, is still a fairly representative one.

The constant endeavor of the Museum in its purchases has been to strengthen the several historical series of prints thus begun. With this policy in mind, little or no effort has been made to secure "long runs" of prints by any one man no matter how important he may have been, the general development of the collection having been deemed of greater moment than its growth in any one place. This policy naturally has been deviated from in several instances, as in the case of the purchase of a set of Canaletto's etchings and of a complete set of proofs of Holbein's Dance of Death. The most important instance in which it was disregarded, however, was in the purchase of the very notable group of prints by Dürer formed during many years of ardent collecting by Junius Spencer Morgan. This was one of the most important collections of Dürer's work in existence, containing in addition to many fine impressions of the woodcuts at least one very fine impression from each of the plates now generally accepted as by him.

From the very beginning of the department the friends of the Museum have been constantly helpful and thoughtful of its needs and requirements, and a very important part of the collection as it stands is the result of their generosity. Space forbids mention of more than a few of these gifts, but no account of the growth of the department would be adequate without acknowledgment of those here referred to. Mortimer L. Schiff and Felix M. Warburg have each presented rare and important single prints and illustrated books of the Renaissance period in Germany and Italy. David Keppel and Henry Walters gave the

miscellaneous collections above referred to. An anonymous donor gave a group of thirty prints by Dürer, Van Dyck, and Rembrandt, including among them magnificent impressions of some of the most important etchings known to the collector, such, for instance, among the Rembrandts, as the *Three Trees*, the *Three Crosses*, the "Hundred Guilder" Print, the *Vista*, the *Landscape with the Milkman*, and the portraits of Jan Lutma, Jan Cornelis Sylvius, and Rembrandt at the Window. William E. Baillie has given the great collection of more than twenty-five thousand bookplates to which he devoted the leisure moments of more than twenty years, and continues to add to it as opportunity occurs. The collection of bookplates is now, thanks to him, the most important general one in this country and in the particularly interesting early American field second only to that in the possession of the Antiquarian Society at Worcester. Although not a gift, especial mention must be made of the important collection of books and prints relating to the arts of the interior decorator and architect which has been lent to the Museum by Ogden Codman. This has been installed in a special room adjoining the offices of the department, where it is serving as the nucleus of the special ornament collection. In itself one of the richest collections of ornament in the country, as supplemented by the collections of the Museum it is quite possibly the most generally representative one on this side of the Atlantic.

It is impossible by statistics to give any idea of the growth of the collections, not only because of the great difference between impressions but because of the fact that many of the most important items occur either as illustrations in books or are contained in bound volumes. Naturally the primitives are as yet few, there being but forty-five early Italian engravings separately mounted and twenty-three German ones. Among the matted prints, to pick out a few of the more important groups, there are sixty-three Rembrandts, three hundred and fifty-five Dürers (and in addition thirteen books illustrated by him), forty-five Holbeins (and ninety-two more

in book form), fifty Cranachs, seventy-eight Altdorfers, two hundred and thirty miscellaneous German Renaissance woodcuts and seventy-five Italian ones, twenty-one Ostades, ten Claudes, one hundred and fifty-two Callots, one hundred and twenty-six Hollars (and in addition a bound collection), thirty Nanteuils, fifty-seven Goyas (and the set of eighty *Caprices* in their original binding), three hundred Whistlers, eighty-five Meryons, and two hundred and eighty-six Hadens. Among the printed books issued during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are thirty-two printed in Italy, eighteen in France, and thirty-nine in Germany. In view of the account of the books which appeared in a recent number of the BULLETIN, it is necessary here only to mention such important items as the Breydenbach of 1486, the *Schatzbehalter*, Dürer's *Life of the Virgin*, Holbein's *Old Testament* of 1538, the *Verona Aesop* of 1479, the *Quadriregio*, Capranica's *Arte del ben morire* of 1490, the *Leven ons Heeren* of 1495, *Horae* by Pigouchet, Kerver, and Tory, and among more modern books such diverse items as Dorat's *Baisers*, Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and the *Expedition des portes de fer*.

A very considerable part of the endeavor of the department has gone into the arrangement of the constantly changing exhibitions in the print galleries. In connection with this a special word of thanks is due to the many ladies and gentlemen who have so kindly and so generously lent their books and prints for inclusion in the exhibitions. Without their aid and support it would have proved impossible for most of the print exhibitions to be given, a very large number of the most interesting and beautiful prints as yet shown in the galleries not having been the property of the Museum. Without enumerating these exhibitions, all of which have been noticed in the BULLETIN, it is worth while calling attention to the facts that but very few have been miscellaneous in character and that most of them have been devoted to specific groups of material. Ranging from primitive German and Italian engravings to the work of the more advanced French

contemporary artists, an endeavor has been made to alternate them in such fashion as to attract the interest of the public. With this same end in view, they have in many cases been enriched by the inclusion of illustrated books, drawings, paintings, and objects of art which were either by the same artists or showed their influence. Of especial interest in this way have been the several exhibitions of ornament in which the use of the engraved or drawn designs in the frames has been illustrated by the juxtaposition of furniture, carvings,

metalwork, pottery, and textiles showing similar designs.

In making its collections and arranging its exhibitions the department has constantly borne in mind the educational character of the Museum and its work, and has endeavored so far as was within its power to emphasize the human aspect of the material with which it dealt and the various uses and purposes not only to which it has been put in the past, but to which it may be applied in the present.

W. M. I., JR.

## ACCESSIONS AND NOTES

**BEQUESTS.** The Museum records with gratitude the receipt of \$25,000, payment in full of the bequest of Jacob H. Schiff, and \$1,000, payment in full of the bequest of Emma Chambers Jones.

**THE STAFF.** Miss Cornelia Ingram, who was appointed last spring an assistant in the Department of Decorative Arts, has entered upon her work in the Textile Study Room. Hardinge Scholle has joined the Department staff as a voluntary assistant in the field of mediaeval studies.

**A VOLUME ON EARLY AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.** The lectures on Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic, delivered by Professor Fiske Kimball in the spring of 1920 at the Museum, have been placed by the Educational Committee of the Museum in the hands of Charles Scribner's Sons for publication. This volume will, it is hoped, be the first of a series of publications bearing the name of the Museum.

**FAMOUS ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOKS.** An exhibition of famous illustrated children's books arranged by the Department of Prints was shown in Class Room B in connection with the educational work of the Museum during Children's Book Week. While not large, the group embraced many famous and beautiful books of this class, often in the original editions. No attempt was made to

bring together editions showing the work of later illustrators, however admirable they may be; the main purpose governing the selection was to show the form in which these books first made their appearance, and the critically minded might decide for themselves the artistic merit and inspiration of the first editions as compared with the later ones.

**THE ANVIL AND BENCH-VISE OF AN ARMORER.** In memory of the late Colonel Ambrose Monell, Mrs. Monell now presents to the Museum two of the most essential implements of the armorer's craft—an anvil and bench-vise—both objects of art. Ten years ago these were borrowed from the Colonel's collection in Tuxedo, and have since remained the most important objects in the armorer's workshop in the main armor hall. The anvil has its striking surface faced with steel and supported on rounded arches developed partly by masses of iron welded in position at the sides of the anvil, partly by chiseling; the base is octangular, with beveled mouldings. It is probably of Italian workmanship, dating not later than the sixteenth century. The bench-vise, sculptured with foliation and mascarons, is north Italian, early seventeenth century. These aids to the armorer's art constitute a peculiarly fitting memorial to one who was deeply interested in the technique of the craft—a student of armor to whom, during the recent war, the National Research Council